

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1-123 without prejudice or disclaimer. Please add the claims set forth below:

124. (New) A method for fabricating an orthopedic implant prosthesis bearing, comprising the steps of:

- a) pre-annealing a polyethylene preform at a temperature greater than ambient temperature and less than the decomposition temperature of the polyethylene for a period of time greater than about 30 minutes;
- b) irradiating the polyethylene preform to crosslink the polyethylene preform; and quenching residual free radicals in the polyethylene preform.

125. (New) The method of claim 124, further comprising the steps of:

- a) cooling the preform after the quenching step to a temperature below the melting temperature of the polyethylene; and
- b) forming the preform into a prosthetic bearing.

126. (New) A method for fabricating an orthopaedic implant prosthesis bearing comprising the steps of:

- a) pre-annealing an ultrahigh molecular weight polyethylene preform;
- b) irradiating the ultrahigh molecular weight polyethylene preform to crosslink the ultrahigh molecular weight polyethylene preform;
- c) quenching residual free radicals in the ultrahigh molecular weight polyethylene preform subsequent to the irradiating step; and

- d) forming the ultrahigh molecular weight polyethylene preform into a prosthetic bearing.

127. (New) A method for fabricating an orthopaedic implant prosthesis bearing comprising the steps of:

- a) pre-annealing a polyethylene preform;
- b) irradiating the polyethylene preform to crosslink the polyethylene preform;
- c) quenching residual free radicals in the polyethylene preform subsequent to the irradiating step; and
- d) forming the polyethylene preform into a prosthetic bearing.